

Southeast Region

Hurricane Katrina/Rita Report

September 20-23, 2005



Due to the approach of **Hurricane Rita**, the Southwest Louisiana NWR Complex (Cameron Prairie NWR, Sabine NWR, Lacassine NWR), Mandalay NWR, Bayou Teche NWR, and the Ecological Services office in Lafayette have been closed. Approximately 61 Service employees (34 from Southwest Louisiana complex, three from Mandalay/Bayou Teche NWRs, 23 from Lafayette Ecological Services office, and one from Lake Charles Office of Law Enforcement) are affected by hurricane evacuation procedures.

A Special Operations Recovery Team (SORT) of six refuge law enforcement officers launched out of Cache River NWR heading to Southwest Louisiana. A second SORT team with three refuge law enforcement personnel left Atlanta today bound for Louisiana to make initial damage assessments of facilities in Hurricane Rita's path.

The Service's Incident Management Team located in Lacombe, Louisiana at Big Branch NWR, continues community service activities. As of Friday, 147 Service personnel are on site. An additional 24 driveways and a school bus stop were cleared over the last few days.

Service crews are working to clear debris from four fire stations in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi to make room for FEMA trailers to temporarily house local fire department personnel. Work also continues to clear seven miles of drainage ditches. In some sections, the debris piles were 20 to 30 feet in height. Roads are being cleared at Panther Swamp NWR in Yazoo, Mississippi, which is estimated to take an additional 12 days.

To date, 28 of 32 Mississippi Sandhill cranes with radio transmitters have been detected. Three remain missing



USFWS/Tom MacKenzie

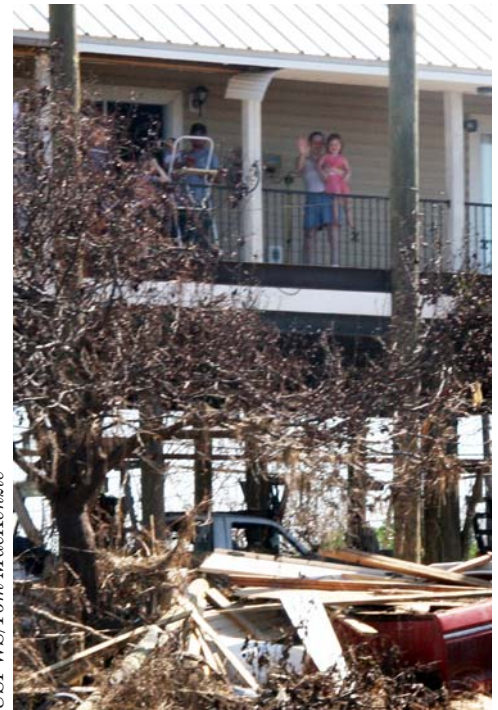
Greg Askins, Savannah NWR saws through pine trees blocking the main entrance to Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex Headquarters in Slidell, Louisiana.

and two mortalities have been confirmed. Approximately 31 of 35 field structures (blinds, pens, feed sheds, traps) were affected. Because of extensive damage to observation blinds, it will take months to fully assess the population, although most are believed to have survived the storm.

The following National Wildlife Refuges remain closed:

Louisiana

Bayou Sauvage NWR – New Orleans
Bayou Teche NWR – Houma
Big Branch Marsh NWR – Lacombe
Bogue Chitto NWR – Pearl River
Breton NWR – Gulf of Mexico
Cameron Prairie – Bell City
Delta NWR – Venice
Lacassine NWR – Lake Arthur
Mandalay NWR – Houma
Sabine NWR – Hackberry



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A friendly wave from residents on Carr Dr., North Shore, Slidell, during sea-borne search and rescue operations in Lacombe and Slidell conducted by Refuge Law Enforcement officers.

Alabama

Bon Secour NWR – Gulf Shores (majority of refuge closed since September 2004 due to Hurricane Ivan)

Mississippi

Mississippi Sandhill Crane NWR – Gautier

The following Louisiana Service Field Offices remain closed:

Ecological Services Office – Lafayette
Office of Law Enforcement - Lake Charles

Additional information

Media contact coordination is being handled by the Regional Office of External Affairs 404/679 7287.